

# *Report*

# Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site

## ■ 1.0 Site Description

The Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site (NHS) consists of the home of Ansley Wilcox, located at 641 Delaware Avenue in Buffalo, New York. On September 6, 1901, President William McKinley was shot and wounded by an assassin in Buffalo. Vice President Theodore Roosevelt arrived in Buffalo the next day and was invited to stay at the home of his friend, Ansley Wilcox. Although McKinley's condition appeared to improve, he ultimately died on September 14. Although Roosevelt had left town during this period, he returned on September 14 and was inaugurated as the 26th President in the Library of the Ansley Wilcox home. This was the first swearing-in in United States history to take place in a city that was not a capital or had never been a capital of the United States.

The front portion of the Ansley Wilcox house was built around 1839 as officers' quarters. Ansley Wilcox enlarged the house to its present size in the 1890s. The architecture is primarily Greek Revival. The first floor contains the visitor orientation room, three restored rooms, one permanent exhibit room on the events of 1901, and restrooms. The lower level has one gallery for changing exhibits and an education classroom. The second floor has one restored room, a large room available for meetings, wall space available for art shows, and a gift shop. There is also an outside garden area. The area encompassed by the site is approximately one acre. In addition to guided tours of the house and grounds, various walking tours of the surrounding neighborhood originate from the site, ranging from one and one-half to three miles in length.

The site is located on Delaware Avenue, a major arterial street, approximately one mile from the center of downtown Buffalo. Parking is provided in the back of the house with capacity for 22 vehicles. There is also on-street metered parking in front of the house. Tour and school buses are directed to park on the street. During special events, additional parking is available in a bank parking lot adjacent to the site.

Visitation to the site is approximately 10,000 to 15,000 visitors annually. Fifty visitors on a single day would be considered heavy visitation. Summer is the peak visitation period, although the site also hosts a Victorian Christmas celebration during the month of December, making December the busiest single month for visitors.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Regularly scheduled bus service, provided by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), runs along Delaware Avenue, providing a connection with transit service throughout the city of Buffalo. This service operates at 30-minute headways and there is a bus stop directly in front of the site. Also, there is a light rail line which operates from the University of Buffalo to downtown, with a stop at the intersection of Allen Street and Main Street, approximately three blocks from the site. According to the Superintendent, most visitors arrive at the site by private automobile, although some visitors and volunteers who work at the site occasionally arrive by bus. There is also a motel nearby and some of the guests at the motel walk to the site.

## ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

The Theodore Inaugural NHS is located in a developed urban neighborhood served by regularly scheduled public bus service. This service provides connections to the overall network of bus service throughout the city of Buffalo, provided by NFTA. Light rail service is also available within three blocks of the site. The site itself consists of a single home and relatively small surrounding acreage. As a result, Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) service is already provided as a means of accessing the site and there is no need for ATS service within the grounds. Walking tours are designated for the surrounding neighborhood and the Superintendent does not envision sufficient demand for alternative means of conducting these tours.

The Superintendent noted that there is a lack of directional signage to the site, either at major intersections or leading to the site itself. A standard design NPS sign is posted in front of the house, although the Superintendent felt that it may not be easily visible from the street.

## ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

Given the availability of regularly scheduled public bus service directly to the site, there are no apparent ATS needs associated with the Theodore Inaugural NHS. The only concern identified by the Superintendent relevant to site access was with regard to the lack of directional signage to the site. A coordinated signage plan would enhance visibility of the site and minimize misrouting to the site by visitors who are unfamiliar with the site location.